

# Channahon looking at trial period for backyard chickens

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*Mike Greene*

The long wait just became a bit longer for those who want to raise chickens in their backyards in Channahon, as the village board this week decided to give thought to the matter for an additional two weeks.

It's been almost a year since the board first heard the request of some residents who want to keep a few chickens in their yards in residential neighborhoods.

Chickens currently are not allowed in Residential-1 or Residential-2 zoned properties, but they are allowed in Channahon's rural areas.

The news for the residents who want to keep fowl is not bad, though. Village staff are drafting an ordinance that the board will consider at its next meeting, Nov. 6. The ordinance went before them for first read Monday, but there were a few tweaks they wanted to make before the final vote. Earlier this month, the vote was 4-2 in favor of drafting the ordinance.

The draft established a 12- or 18-month pilot program that will grant up to eight licenses allowing backyard chickens in R-1 or R-2 single family home properties.

If the draft is approved next month, several conditions would have to be met for residents to participate in the program. A coop and pen would have to be constructed, and all hens would have to be kept in the coop or pen. Roosters would be prohibited.

The coop would have to have a minimum of 10 square feet for each hen and a setback of at least 10 feet from lot lines and at least 30 feet from other residences. A pen would have to adjoin the coop and would be prohibited from covering more than 25 percent of the backyard.

Pens and coops would have to be shorter than six feet in height and surrounded by a six-foot solid wood or pvc fence. A building permit would have to be obtained from the village.

The board is also considering requiring a bond be posted by each applicant that would be used for code enforcement if necessary.

At previous board meetings, several residents in favor of backyard chickens spoke up. Monday's meeting heard from a few who were against the prospect.

Joe Ventsias said he wouldn't have bought his property if he knew there would be chickens next door. They're a "noisy mess," he said, and not something he wants next to his home. Ventsias said he was also concerned about enforcement.

Lori Ventsias said it wasn't fair for the majority of residents to have to put up with chicken coops in the neighborhood for the benefit of the few who want them.

Resident Laurie Pillion had different worries.

"I'm concerned because I have two hunting dogs," she said. "If neighbors get chickens, and one gets in my yard, we've got a dead chicken."

Pillion said she believes allowing residents to have chickens will cause animosity between neighbors.

"I just don't think it should be allowed, period," she said. "Move where you can have them."

Village President Missey Moorman Schumacher said she was also against the ordinance to allow backyard chickens. She asked where the line should be drawn between residential and rural properties.

A supporter of the issue, Craig Parshall, said the ordinance would set up a system of accountability and respectfulness of neighbors.

"We're not asking for things that haven't been done in other places," he said.

Previously, supporters gave a petition to trustees with names of 300 Channahon residents who they said supported the effort. Keeping backyard chickens is an interesting hobby, they said, a fun and educational experience for children and cuts down on the amount of food garbage going to landfills. They added that chickens produce eggs and keep down the mice, mole, tick and flea population, as well, and do not attract predators.

Several communities in the area allow backyard chickens in town, supporters said, including Minooka, Westmont, Downers Grove, Naperville, Plainfield, Brookfield and even Chicago.

The Channahon village board this week also learned that Channahon will be the recipient of one of the 34 Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) grants for the Local Technical Assistance Program. Village Administrator Thomas Durkin said the grant will pay Channahon 15 percent of the costs for a consultant or staff assistant to help update the village's comprehensive plan.